

# EDUCATION FOR A LIFETIME



"creating a Commonwealth of Opportunity for all"

*Mark R Warner*

## *Preserving and Strengthening Higher Education*

***Higher education helps individuals earn substantially more income and contribute to their communities. Research and development stimulates economic growth, creates jobs, helps save lives, and addresses critical problems.***

***Governor Warner's Education for a Lifetime initiatives for higher education are comprised of two main goals: 1) increasing student access to -- and success with -- higher education; and 2) developing strategies that promote a research-oriented environment while wisely investing state resources to strengthen the quality, effectiveness, and productivity of academic research programs.***

The Commonwealth of Virginia has long benefited from its outstanding system of higher education. From the founding of the College of William and Mary in the 1690s to the establishment of the Virginia Community College System in the 1960s, Virginia's strong higher education system has been and continues to be a priceless public asset. It helps produce a well-educated citizenry, enriches our civic life, and contributes to our understanding of history, science, and the arts.

Moreover, higher education benefits our Commonwealth economically in two critical ways: by producing graduates who possess real earning (and spending) power; and by stimulating research, development, and innovation. Higher education -- from the community college to the doctoral degree -- helps individuals earn substantially more income and contribute to their communities. Research and development stimulates economic growth, creates jobs, helps save lives, and addresses critical problems in Virginia, the nation, and the world.

## **Importance of Student Success**

For many people, graduation from some level of higher education is critical in the new economy. In fact, education level is the best predictor of quality of life. Well-educated communities will likely prosper in the 21st-century economy. Poorly educated communities will likely wither, in part because inhabitants suffer from more crime; lack of economic development and jobs; and a host of health-related and social problems.

Additional education makes workers more productive and enables them to increase their earnings -- factors that make companies more likely to locate or expand in states where workers are highly educated. And when people earn higher income, they use the additional money for increased consumption and investment. This additional spending ripples

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through the economy, producing even more economic activity.

Yet it's not enough simply to attend college – students need to succeed in college in order to reap the improved salary benefits. The value of obtaining a degree is clearly measurable:

- **Associate degree = \$8,000 higher salary.** On average, a person with an associate degree earns \$8,000 more than a person with a high school diploma and \$20,000 more than a person without a high school diploma.
- **Bachelor's degree = \$13,000 higher salary.** On average, a person with a bachelor's degree earns \$13,000 more than a person with a high school diploma and \$25,000 more than a person without a high school diploma.
- **Master's degree = \$28,000 higher salary.** On average, a person with a master's degree earns \$28,000 more than a person with a high school diploma and a whopping \$40,000 more than a person who did not complete high school.

Simply put, there are clear payoffs to education. We need to do a better job of increasing student access to higher education – in part through the Governor's Senior Year Plus Initiatives – and we need to do a better job of ensuring student success.

## Importance of Research and Development

Research and development are other important keys to prosperity in the new economy, from creating new jobs at high-tech start-up businesses to curing diseases through research at our medical schools. Research also plays a critical function in passing the torch of knowledge to students through leadership and scholarship in the academic community. New technologies and economic development depend upon new basic knowledge, which

comes as a result of having the resources to ask questions, and the time to determine which questions are sound and which paths are worth following.

The relationship between funded research and economic development is well documented. A study published by the U.S. Department of Commerce, for example, noted that major universities and research institutions are key suppliers of innovations that contribute to economic development.

Yet the mere presence of R and D in the Commonwealth may not be sufficient to generate the kinds of return we know are possible, given Virginia's assets. There also must be intent and direction.

While Virginia has performed reasonably well in a tough economic and policy environment, we can do better. We took a significant step forward last year by approving a General Obligation Bond issue, which provided over \$200 million for research facilities and labs at our colleges and universities.

If Virginia wants to advance its research agenda, it will need to establish goals and develop strategies that promote a more conducive environment for research. Likewise, it will need to invest its resources – monetary, human, and physical – into strengthening the quality, effectiveness, and productivity of academic research programs.

## The Governor's Higher Education Goals

The Governor's goals for higher education are designed to produce a better-educated, more prosperous Commonwealth by ensuring that

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students have every chance to succeed at every level. The importance of degrees and the stimulus provided by research and development are crucial aspects of this initiative. This means more college graduates need to earn everything from associate degrees to doctorates. It also means strengthening the research capacity of Virginia's institutions of higher education to create more jobs and more opportunity for all Virginians.

By setting clear and measurable goals, the Governor's higher education initiative will:

## ***I. Yield an additional 10,000 degrees, from associate degrees to doctorates, by 2010 by:***

- ✦ Expanding capacity across the system of higher education to accommodate the additional 61,000 students seeking places in our public colleges and universities this decade;
- ✦ Providing safe, up-to-date, and well-maintained classrooms and laboratories;
- ✦ Filling in the gaps between high school and postsecondary education to make sure more students succeed in college;
- ✦ Maintaining student financial aid to ensure broad access to our colleges and universities;
- ✦ Encouraging institutions to add or expand high-demand academic programs, such as teaching and health professions;
- ✦ Reaching out to underserved student populations and regions to widen their higher education opportunities;
- ✦ Encouraging more use of distance learning and the Virginia Virtual Library (VIVA) to expand educational opportunity across the Commonwealth;
- ✦ Strengthening and expanding transfer agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions; and
- ✦ Using our private colleges to help meet enrollment demand.

## ***II. Increase Virginia's higher education research and development expenditures to \$1 billion by 2010 by:***

- ✦ Working with a panel of national experts to help Virginia focus on outstanding research programs that have the greatest potential for growth and opportunity;
- ✦ Providing state-of-the-art technology, equipment, and laboratory space;
- ✦ Encouraging cooperative ventures, such as the Institute for Homeland Defense and Security, that build on the collective strengths of our colleges and universities; and

## ***III. Ensure greater accountability for investments in higher education by:***

- ✦ Conducting an independent "policy audit" with the National Collaborative for Postsecondary Education Policy to identify policies and procedures that need improvement;
- ✦ Supporting institutional efforts to improve quality;
- ✦ Creating incentives for improving student retention so that students not only enroll but also progress; and
- ✦ Eliminating regulations and constraints that increase the cost of education without increasing its quality or effectiveness.

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